

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BISSAU 00283 130828Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-08 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 FRB-03
INR-10 NSAE-00 USIA-06 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03
SP-02 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 L-03 H-01 NSC-05
SS-15 STR-07 CEA-01 PA-01 AGRE-00 IO-13 EUR-12
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FM AMEMBASSY BISSAU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0970
INFO AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY ROME

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ROME FOR FODAG

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAID, PU
SUBJECT: FOOD SHORTAGES AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS

1. CONTINUING FOOD SHORTAGE IN GUINEA-BISSAU DUE TO POOR RAINS
LAST YEAR IS PLACING INCREASING STRAIN ON GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT
PLANS AND BEGINNING TO CREATE POLITICAL TENSIONS. RULING PARTY'S
(PAIGC) HIGHEST LEVEL BODY (SUPERIOR COUNCIL OF THE STRUGGLE -
CSL) JUST COMPLETED REGULAR QUARTERLY SESSION AND WE UNDERSTAND
GREAT DEAL OF TIME WAS SPENT ON FOOD PROBLEM.

2. AT PRESENT, GOGB BELIEVES IT IS STILL FACING 34,000 TON
DEFICIT IN BASIC FOOD RICE, UNTIL NEXT CROP CAN BE HARVESTED
BEGINNING IN DECEMBER. POTENTIAL DONORS TO WHOM GOGB MADE
APPEAL IN JANUARY (BISSAU 0050) HAVE TO DATE QUARANTEED OR
PROMISED MAXIMUM 10,500 TONS OF RICE (INCLUDING USG 4,000
TONS). GOGB FINALLY RECEIVED COMMERCIAL PURCHASE 5,000
TONS RICE MARCH 9 WHICH HAD BEEN ORDERED LAST NOVEMBER
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PAGE 02 BISSAU 00283 130828Z

(PROBABLY WITH SWEDISH AID MONEY).

3. PRIOR TO MARCH 9 RICE DELIVERY, NO RPT NO RICE HAD BEEN
AVAILABLE IN LOCAL MARKET FOR OVER FOUR WEEKS. SITUATION IN
COUNTRYSIDE VARIES FROM REGION TO REGION, BUT RUMORS
(PROBABLY EXAGGERATED) OF DEATHS BY STARVATION HAVE BEGUN
TO CIRCULATE.

4. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ARE PARTICULARLY CONCERNED ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS IN COUNTRYSIDE WHERE PEASANTS ARE BURNING CHARCOAL TO UNPRECEDENTED DEGREE, DESTROYING CATTLE, AND BEGINNING TO MIGRATE. GOGB CONCERNED THAT EVEN IF RAINS COME IN ADEQUATE AMOUNT, PLANTING MAY FALL SHORT OF NORMAL WITH RESULTING SHORTFALL IN HARVEST FOR NEXT YEAR.

5. AS MENTIONED ABOVE, CSL DEVOTED MAJORITY OF RECENT CONFERENCE TO FOOD PROBLEM. GOVERNMENT'S SUPPLY OF FOREIGN CURRENCY EXTREMELY LIMITED APART FROM CASH AID (E.G. SWEDEN) WHICH GOGB MAY BE FORCED TO USE FOR FOOD PURCHASES. FOREX SITUATION AGGRAVATED BY SOVIET UNION DECISION TO WITHDRAW ALL ITS FISHING BOATS "FOR REPAIRS", THEREBY SUSPENDING ALL FISHING OPERATIONS BY JOINT GUINEA-BISSAU/USSR COMPANY. SOVIET

DECISION APPEARS TO COINCIDE WITH GOGB EFFORTS TO RENEGOTIATE FISHING AGREEMENT.

6. OTHER MAJOR ITEM ON AGENDA OF CSL MEETING WAS THAT OF CORRUPTION BY SENIOR OFFICIALS. WHILE DEGREE OF CORRUPTION IS STILL NEGLIGIBLE, SOME OFFICIALS HAVE RECENTLY COME INTO POSSESSION OF HOUSES, CARS, AND BUSINESSES. CSL MEETING DEVOTED GREAT DEAL OF DISCUSSION TO THIS PHENOMENA, AND LEVIED SEVERE CRITICISM AGAINST PRACTICE OF ANY OFFICIAL COMBINING PUBLIC FUNCTIONS WITH PRIVATE GAIN. OFFICIALS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 BISSAU 00283 130828Z

INVOLVED WILL BE FORCED TO RESIGN OR DIVEST THEMSELVES OF PRIVATE INTERESTS.

7. ALL OF THESE FACTORS ARE IMPINGING ON POLITICALLY DELICATE PROBLEM OF LIBERATION STRUGGLE VETERANS. GUINEA-BISSAU ARMED FORCES STILL NUMBER ABOUT 10,000 AND CONSTITUTE HEAVY DRAIN ON GOVERNMENT RESOURCES. IN ADDITION, APPROXIMATELY 3,000 WOUNDED VETS AND DEPENDANTS ARE RESPONSIBILITY OF GOVERNMENT. FOOD SHORTAGE IS ADDITIONAL HARDSHIP FOR THE LATTER. GOVERNMENT IS REPORTEDLY UNDER INCREASING PRESSURE TO FIND JOBS FOR VETS AND EXCESS SOLDIERS, ALMOST NONE OF WHOM HAVE MARKETABLE SKILLS.

8. USG FOOD AID IS WIDELY KNOWN AND GREATLY APPRECIATED. OPPORTUNITY NOW PRESENTS ITSELF, IN CONTEXT OF PL-480 EMERGENCY FOOD AID PROGRAM, TO SOLIDIFY TREND TOWARDS BETTER USG-GOGB RELATIONS AS GOGB FINDS ITSELF UNABLE TO DEAL WITH THIS SHORT-RUN EMERGENCY WHICH IS CREATING HARDSHIP FOR ORDINARY CITIZEN AND POSES THREAT TO GOVERNMENT.

9. WE HOPE TO OBTAIN HARD FIGURES ON CURRENT SITUATION IN NEXT FEW DAYS. UPON RECEIPT, WE INTEND TO PROPOSE EXPANDED

PL-480 TITLE II PROGRAM FOR GUINEA-BISSAU.
MARKS

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